THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • DECEMBER 30, 2021 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

I-T DEPT EASES NORMS FOR FACELESS APPEAL SCHEME

Taxpayers can now appeal against the I-T dept's tax demand via video-conference without waiting for designated officials' nod

ORAL HEARING MADE A MATTER OF RIGHT

The income tax department has revised its faceless appeal scheme to grant oral hearing to taxpayers through video-conferencing as a matter of right while dealing with their appeals. Earlier, granting oral hearing was at the sole discretion of designated officials. The faceless appeal scheme 2021 has been introduced with effect from Tuesday, a government notification said

EARLIER SCHEME INVITED COURT CASES

- The revised, simplified scheme comes in the backdrop of challenges the previous scheme faced in courts
- Under the revised norms, all communication between assessees and Commissioner (Appeals) will be through National Faceless Appeal Centre, which will only use electronic communication

Feb 28

THE REVISED DEADLINE FOR TAXPAYERS TO COMPLETE THEIR ITR E-VERIFICATION

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Hospitality, other sectors cite loss in biz over last 2 yrs, seek relaxation for last 2 days of the yr

No night curfew on Dec 31? CM to hold meeting today

AMIT S UPADHYE @Hubballi

CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday hinted that the government may take a relook at the night curfew clamped in the wake of opposition mounting from different quarters.

The opposition came first from the hospitality sector which has been reeling under losses for the last two New Year Eves. The sector was hoping to make some gains this year-end, but the night curfew has dampened the spirit.

Bommai, who was in Hubballi to attend the BJP executive committee meeting, said he is aware of the opposition to night curfew, which was introduced to contain the recent surge in Covid cases. He added that a decision will be taken in a day. "I am watching the developments. I will see what can be done. I will be in Bengaluru on Thursday and will hold a meeting with expert committee members before taking a decision," he added.

Many sectors have been requesting the government to relax the curfew norms at least on December 30 and 31 to allow businesses to see some profit.

"It's not just the public, the BJP too is divided over the night curfew order. Cases are still low and it has been proved that Omicron is milder than the previous Covid variants. The government should be lenient at least on the New Year's Eve as most of the bookings have been done before the night curfew was clamped. Hoteliers have agreed to cancel large gatherings, but you cannot ask revellers to go home at 10 pm on New Year's Eve," rued a hotelier from Hubballi.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai boards a 'Clinic on Wheels' ambulance developed by the state Labour Department in Hubballi on Wednesday

State sees 37.1% jump in fresh Covid cases, cluster outbreaks rise

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

AMID fears of a third Covid wave, the state saw a 37.10 per cent jump in Wednesday's Covid cases at 566 as compared to Tuesday's tally of 356. This is the first time since early October that the state has recorded over 500 cases a day. With Wednesday's numbers, total Covid cases have gone up to 30,05,798 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Bengaluru contributed a major chunk of Wednesday's cases with 400 people testing positive. The state also saw six deaths, taking the toll to 38,324.

Also, five new Omicron cases were confirmed in the state, taking the tally of this new Covid variant to 43. A 22-year-old woman and a 24-year-old man travelling from the US, a 53-year-old man travelling from Dubai, a 61-year-old man coming from Ghana and a 41-year-old travelling from Mumbai were found to have Omicron, the health department reported on Wednesday.

Cluster outbreaks were reported in Kolar and Mandya. At Morarji Desai School in Kolar, 10 students tested positive and at a private nursing college in Bangarpet, four students are Covid-positive. At the school, after a student reported symptoms of fever, she was tested and the result came positive. Later, all the 252 students were tested, of which ten are positive. The school has now been declared a containment zone.

At a village in Maddur taluk of Mandya district, five primary class students at the Hallikere Government School tested positive. Initially, one student tested positive and after that all the 50 students were made to give swab samples, of which four are positive. Health officials rushed to the spot and sanitised the school premises before sealing it for a few days. Taluk health officials said there is no need to worry as the students are asymptomatic and isolated. P3

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT

Dec 28	57,76,358 doses
Dec 29	57,03,410 doses
TOTAL:	1,43,75,14,61

NATIONWIDE	DEC 28	DEC 29
Fresh cases	6,358	9,195
Recoveries	6,450	7,347
Deaths	293	302

KARNATAKA	DEC 28	DEC 29
Fresh cases	356	566
Recoveries	347	245
Deaths	2	6

MAHA SPURT IN CASES

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope described the rise in fresh and active Covid cases in the state as alarming. While active cases were around 6,000 till last week, Tuesday's figure was 11,492 and on Wednesday, it may cross 20,000, he said

2L+ CASES IN FRANCE

France registered a record high of 2,08,000 new Covid cases in the past 24 hours. In the US, too, average daily fresh cases have soared to the highest level on record — over 2,65,000, largely driven by the Omicron variant

Key concerns

- Momentum gained by economic recovery could be lost if Covid cases surge
- Inflation remains a big worry, as it pulls down recovery benefits
- Credit to MSMEs remain slow. RBI says so far only ₹2.28 lakh crore disbursed under ECLGS while SCBs disbursed only ₹1.98 lakh crore

Indian banks asset quality set to worsen; gross NPA may jump to 9.5% by September 2022

A sustainable recovery will depend on the revival of private investment and shoring up private consumption, which still remains below pre-pandemic levels

RBI puts question mark over economic recovery

ANURADHA SHUKLA @New Delhi

THE momentum gained by the economic recovery could be lost if Omicron cases surge and inflation remains high, the Reserve Bank of India warned on Wednesday. Flagging challenges to the economy, RBI said the new Covid variant haunts the near-term prospects and the outlook is overcast with global risks. In the worst-case scenario, banks' gross non-performing assets may jump from 6.9% in September 2021 to 9.5% by September 2022, it warned in the 24th issue of the Financial Stability Report, released on Wednesday.

"More recent high-frequency indicators of economic activity suggest some loss of momentum in the third quarter of 2021-22. The pace of the recovery remains uneven across sectors, inflation formation is being subjected to repetitive supply shocks and the outlook is overcast with global risks. Omicron haunts near-term prospects," it added.

The report underlines that inflation remains a major concern as commodity and food prices have remain elevated for a protracted period and has called for stronger supply-side measures to contain food and energy prices. Among the major risks to economic growth are high commodity prices, domestic inflation, equity price volatility, asset quality deterioration, credit growth, and cyber disruptions. In this context, on the domestic front, stronger and sustainable recovery hinges on the revival of private investment and shoring up private consumption, which still remains below their pre-pandemic levels, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in his foreword to the report.

On public finance, the report said that even when the government manages to stick to its fiscal deficit target, the Centre's gross borrowing is likely to remain elevated notwithstanding fiscal consolidation. "Macro stress tests for credit risk indicate that the gross non-performing asset ratio of SCBs (scheduled commercial banks) may increase from 6.9% in September 2021 to 8.1% by September 2022 under the baseline scenario and to 9.5% under a severe stress scenario," the report noted.

At the same time, the report said the strong balance sheets of banks with higher capital and liquidity buffers will help mitigate future shocks.

Nagaland SIT to quiz jawans on encounter

ENS @ Guwahati

A Special Investigation Team constituted by the Nagaland government will on Thursday question the Army personnel involved in the December 4 killing of civilians during and after a botched ambush at Oting in Mon district. The questioning will happen face to face.

Parallelly, an Army team probing the case visited places in Mon, including the site of ambush, on Wednesday. The team was led by a Major General who is heading the probe.

Konyak (tribe) civil society organisations had earlier asked the personnel to not come in uniform or with arms "for their safety as the sight of uniform and weapons might provoke the villagers". The personnel cooperated and were provided security by the state police.

In a statement, the Army's 3 Corps headquarters based in Nagaland's Dimapur said the Court of Inquiry inspected the shooting site and took along witnesses for better understanding of the situation and how events would have unfolded. Later, the team visited the Tizit police station and met a cross-section of the society.

GOOGLE

The Competition Commission of India told the K'taka HC that there will be no precipitative action against Google till Jan 5, 2022, the next date of hearing |P13

EXPRESS READ

Congress to get new chief by Sept 2022

New Delhi: The Congress party will get its new national president by September next year and preparations are on in full swing to conduct party elections, said Madhusudan Mistry, president of the Congress Election Authority. The polls have been pushed several times due to Covid-19 and assembly elections but the party in November announced a detailed schedule.

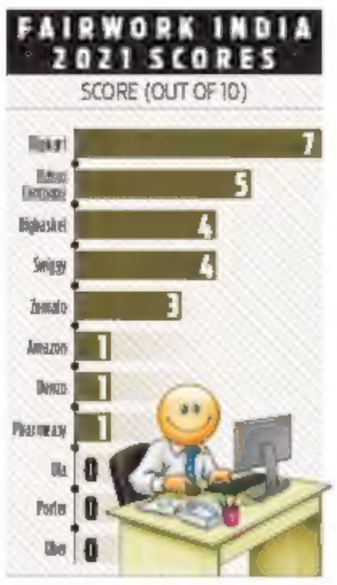
PM-KISAN Instalment for farmers from Jan 1

New Delhi: As a New Year gift to farmers, the Modi government will transfer over Rs 20,000 crore to bank accounts of more than 10 crore farmers across the country under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme on January 1. This would be the 10th installment to the farmers since the start of the scheme. More than Rs 1.6 lakh crore has been transferred to farmer families so far.

Govt bans import of 351 items for forces

New Delhi: In a push for indigenisation, the government on Wednesday notified a ban on import of 351 sub-systems and components for the armed forces under a staggered timeline, commencing from December next year. The items will be indigenised in the next three years. "This Aatmanirbhar initiative will save foreign exchange approximately equivalent of Rs 3,000 crore every year," a defence ministry statement said.

Flipkart best, Ola, Uber worst in taking care of gig workers: Report



DONNA EVA @Bengaluru

OLA and Uber, two of the biggest ride-sharing companies in India, scored zero, while Flipkart got the highest rating of seven in providing good working conditions to their gig workers, revealed a recent study.

The report was prepared by Fairwork India as part of the Centre for IT and Public Policy (CITAPP), International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B) and Oxford University. The study was taken up to highlight the working condition of gig workers across the country. The report -- 'The Fairwork India Ratings 2021: Labour Standards in the Platform Economy' -- studied 11 platforms, Ola, Uber, Amazon, Zomato, Swiggy, Dunzo, BigBasket, Flipkart, PharmEasy, Porter and Urban Company. The platforms were rated on a scale of ten on fair pay, fair conditions, fair contracts, fair management and fair representation given to their employees. Ola, Uber and Porter, which is a moving services app, scored zero, while Flipkart got seven, which is the highest of all the platforms studied. But none scored across all criteria.

A point was given to each criterion if platforms satisfied basic conditions, like grievance redressal (management), minimum wage, accessible contract and others. Another point was given if the platforms went above the minimum requirements. P13

SWINGING IT

India bowlers, including Jasprit Bumrah (2/22), troubled South Africa batters at Centurion on Day 4, Wednesday. With India setting a target of 305, the Proteas were reduced to 94/4 at stumps. Though India are in control, weather could play spoilsport on the final day. P17

RIDE EASY

If Bill okayed, pedestrians, cyclists to have safe space on roads

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

TO encourage cyclists, reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility conditions in the state, the Department of Urban Land Transport (DULT) released the draft of the Active Mobility Bill on Wednesday.

Officials said this is the first time in the country that a mobility plan is being proposed especially for Bengaluru, where traffic management is a major challenge. The Bill has been sent to all government departments and stakeholders for suggestions and has also been put out on the department website https://dult.karnataka.gov.in/121/active-mobility-bill/en for the public to give their views. The last date for posting suggestions, feedback and inputs is January 31, 2022.

"It is aimed at protecting the rights of pedestrians and cyclists to safe, accessible and connected pedestrian and cycling networks in urban areas in the State, with a view to promote sustainable urban mobility and build healthy communities," the Bill stated. An exponential increase in the number of vehicles on urban streets has caused congestion and deteriorated air quality. It has also led to a rise in road fatalities with pedestrians and cyclists more at risk, the Bill stated. The legislation is aimed at giving the right of way to pedestrians and cyclists, it added.

The Bill has been drafted as the current legal framework does not have specific provisions to determine and protect the rights of pedestrians and cyclists, and give them equitable space on roads. The purpose of the Bill is to facilitate a transition to sustainable urban areas where streets and public places are designed keeping in view the needs and requirements of all road users.

Sathya Sankaran, urban mobility consultant and Bicycle Mayor of Bengaluru, termed the Bill revolutionary and said it is on the lines of the Singapore model. If the government accepts and makes the Bill official, it will help solve traffic issues to a large extent in the state, he added. CONTINUED ON P4